

# The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

In recent days many people have complained to me at how toxic social and political intercourse has become. Long friendships have been ruined because of disagreements on “social media.” Sometimes I think that “social media” should be rechristened “anti-social media!” We have to be very cautious in how we communicate our thoughts via services like Facebook and Twitter because that type of technology does not easily allow for nuanced discussion as would normally be had in person. It can be hard to interpret what is being communicated because we cannot hear the person’s voice, see his expression, etc. Quite frankly, I recommend staying off of social media as much as possible... keep it at arms length. The same goes for the internet and computer devices in general. The more time we spend interacting with machines the less human we become, and we begin to treat everyone else like a machine... an object to be used rather than a subject with whom to enter into fellowship. The rise of the internet is directly related to the loosening of morals and the devaluation of human life, because the internet makes us think we are gods. If there is anything we want to know the “answer” to we can “Google” it. If there is anything we want to see we can look online. It makes us feel like we have the power of God! And that we can know anything and everything. This can actually be quite satanic in that the “answers” that internet search engines give us to our questions are deceiving. This is because they are determined by algorithms, which are written by corporations that have definite agendas. In other words, the “answers” to life that we can get online are hardly fair and balanced. Social media and “surfing the internet” are a huge time drain as well. It can take hours to customize security settings, decide who to “friend” and who not to, to unfriend or unfollow someone, and on and on. It is also dangerous. A recent study found that the more people use Facebook the more it makes them depressed. Furthermore, typing on computers and staring at screens all day is horrible for the body... the eyes, the spine, the joints in the hands, etc. So, I strongly advise that we spend less time on social media and the internet and more time deepening our spiritual life, deepening our relationships with our family and neighbors, connecting with nature, exercising, reading books, exploring edifying hobbies such as cooking, art, music, and more. The more time we spend glued to these machines and trapped in these social media networks the more we are killing ourselves morally and spiritually. We cannot escape using this technology at some point or another. That is a given. But we can definitely regulate ourselves better than we do so that we do not overdose on this stuff, but rather grow as human beings and followers of Christ.

Faithfully, your priest,

*J. Gordon Anderson*

February 2017

IN THIS ISSUE:

**Diocesan News, p. 2**

*News From Around the Church*

**Historical Theology, p. 3**

*A Primer on the 39 Articles of Religion*

**Parish News and Updates, p.4**

*Important News and Other Items*

UPCOMING PRAYER BOOK

HOLY DAYS:

**Feb. 2nd - The Purification of St. Mary the Virgin**

Holy Communion at 12:00 p.m.

**Feb. 24th - St. Matthias**

Holy Communion at 12:00 p.m.

**Mar. 1st - Ash Wednesday**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.

**Mar. 8th, 10th, and 11th - Lenten Ember Days**

Holy Communion at 12:00 p.m.

**Mar. 25th - Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Holy Communion at 12:00 p.m.

*Don't forget that we offer the Holy Eucharist Tuesday - Friday at 12:00 p.m. for other feasts and fasts of the Church! The schedule is found online.*

DIOCESAN NEWS: *2017 Synod in Atlanta Will Be Very Special*

Every year the Diocese of the Eastern United States meets in diocesan synod, and every three years the Anglican Province of America meets in provincial synod. This year is going to be very special, not only because we are having diocesan synod and provincial synod at the same time, but also because several other Anglican jurisdictions will be holding their synods at the same time and in the same location! The other jurisdictions are the ACA (Anglican Church in America), the DHC (Diocese of the Holy Cross), and the ACC (Anglican Catholic Church). The reason for this is so that we may establish formal intercommunion between us all. *De facto* intercommunion already exists and has now for a while.

Some jurisdictions already have formal agreements (such as between us and the ACA). So all this meeting does is formalize what has already been happening. At the synod, which takes place in Atlanta, Georgia, each jurisdiction will meet on its own to discuss its own business and have its own meetings. But we will all come together for worship each day, share meals, and then have a huge joint communion service where the concordat of intercommunion will be signed by the bishops. This is not a merger of the four churches. If and when that happens it will be way down the road and only done "in the fullness of time." But what this will do is help us share resources, increase fellowship, and be more effective in advancing the Kingdom of God. ✠

MISSION NEWS: *An Update on India from Canon Haines: Upcoming Visit Scheduled*

*As mentioned in last month's issue of The Centurion there will be a quarterly mission focus for 2017 highlighting our overseas missions. The focus country for the first quarter of 2017 is India. Last month we read news of one of our churches in India and one of our schools. This month we will hear The Rev'd. Canon Haines' brief report on India given at the Diocesan Standing Committee meeting at our recent winter conference.*

Plans are almost finalized for a visit to India by Bishop Grundorf, Dr. Mary Grundorf, and Fr. David Haines. The team will depart from the U.S.A. on February 14th, arriving in Hyderabad on February 16th. The team will then depart from India and arrive back in the United States on February 26th.

The purpose of the trip is to visit a number of churches that Bishop Jaya Rao has established in Andhra Pradesh and Telengana, and to visit the newly established Good Shepherd School in Kollur in the newly established state of Telegana. The full itinerary is still being finalized and visas for the visit have not yet been obtained. Application for visas cannot be started until thirty days before arriving in India. This is all as a result of new restrictions and requirements instituted by the recently elected government. We are fortunate once again that OM

(Operation Mobilization) Pastor Swamy Das will serve as our translator during the trip.

The initial part of the visit will be spent visiting Bishop Jaya Rao and a selection of the churches in his ever-expanding diocese. The plan is to visit the cathedral church in Jammalamdugu and representative churches in each nine districts in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telegana.

The second part of the visit will be spent with OM-India visiting the campus in Hyderabad, the Good Shepherd School in Kollur in Mahbubnagar District, and meeting with the bishops and other leaders of the Good Shepherd Churches which are part of the larger OM operation in India.

Finances: As a result of the implementation of new laws by the government of India, the amount of money that we were able to wire to support the work of Bishop Jaya Rao and his clergy has had to be reduced to \$1,500 per month from \$1,700 per month that was agreed upon in March 2016. This lower amount was the amount listed in our original letter of support that we were required to put together for the Indian banks and government in 2015. The Indian government's crackdown on money coming into India from various foreign NGOs has resulted in the restriction being enforced. ✠

*"The minister is ordered, from time to time, to advise the People, whilst they are still in health, to make Wills arranging for the disposal of their temporal goods, and, when of ability, to leave Bequests for religious and other charitable uses." (BCP, p. 320)*

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 HISTORICAL THEOLOGY: *A Primer on the 39 Articles of Religion of the Church of England*

If you look in the very back of the Book of Common Prayer after page 600 you will find this: “Articles of Religion.” And the second line reads: “As Established by the Bishops, the Clergy, and the Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, in Convention, on the twelfth day of September, in the Year of our Lord 1801.” This is the title page to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.

The Articles of Religion are brief statements on certain aspects of doctrine and church life that were drawn up by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer at the time of the Reformation. Their earliest incarnation was 1536 with the “Ten Articles” and their final incarnation came in 1563. In very simple form they laid down the Anglican position on specific controversies surrounding dogmatic tenets. While not completely vague, they are, at the same time, not overly detailed in comparison to other Reformation era statements of faith. (e.g. The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Augsburg Confession, etc.). In their final form they articulated the bare minimum on which the various factions in the English Church could agree. They had no sort of authority until Queen Elizabeth was excommunicated by the pope. Only then were they established by authority as a sort of litmus test for those who would minister in the established church. From that time until 1865 all clergy of the Church of England had to “subscribe” to the Articles of Religion meaning they had to agree that they were agreeable to scripture. After 1865 this requirement was moderated.

The purpose of the Articles of Religion in the American Church, as well as in the other national Anglican churches that traced their origins to the Church of England is somewhat different from what they were in England. When the American Episcopal Church was organized following the revolution there was disagreement as to whether, following English tradition, the Articles should be bound with the Book of Common Prayer. This is an important point that needs to be emphasized. *Though often bound with it, the Articles of Religion are not part of the Book of Common Prayer.* The American Church eventually decided to include the Articles of Religion with the Book of Common Prayer, but she did not require any sort of subscription to them as the English Church did her clergy. It was thought that “agreement” with them was implied in the oath of conformity taken by clergy upon ordination. Though the Articles were held in high regard by many of the leaders of the fledgling Episcopal Church, that leadership was wise in not making them a doctrinal confession that would stand in perpetuity in the Church. Almost two hundred years later the Episcopal Church put

the Articles of Religion in a new “Historical Documents” section of their 1979 Book of Common Prayer.

Just as the Articles of Religion have their own unique tradition in the Church of England, and the Episcopal Church, so they have their own tradition in the Anglican Province of America. Coming as we do out of the Episcopal Church, our approach to them is somewhat similar. The Solemn Declaration of our province mentions the Articles of Religion and recognizes them, along with the Book of Common Prayer and the Affirmation of St. Louis, as a received document of the Anglican tradition. But the key is that it places them in a subordinate place to the Scriptures, Creeds, and teachings of the Ecumenical Councils.

The reason this is important to emphasize is because the Articles of Religion are easily misconstrued by some, who think them to be the English equivalent of something like the Westminster Confession of Faith, to which some Presbyterian and some other churches hold. In those churches the Westminster Confession of Faith, and its accompanying Larger and Shorter Catechisms, while obviously not on the level of Holy Scripture, is seen as being *the best summary* of what they teach, and clergy and laity must subscribe to them to be part of the church. This particular confession, along with some of the other Lutheran confessions of faith, go into extraordinary detail on doctrinal minutia, and take the church in decidedly partisan directions.

The Articles of Religion, in contrast, set forth no body of divinity. They are subordinate to and interpreted by the Book of Common Prayer, and then, beyond that, by the Scriptures, Creeds, and Councils. Those who are confused because of the brevity and succinctness of the Articles, and who want them to comment more thoroughly and conclusively on some matter, such as the Holy Sacraments, need to go to these other sources to get greater clarification of what the Articles mean. They are wonderful to read, and every Anglican should probably read them through at least once in his or her life. And even though they touch on a lot things that are simply irrelevant today because theology has progressed beyond 16th century forms, there is still a lot of good that can be had from studying them. We just need to keep in mind that they are not an independent body of brute theological facts. Neither are they the final word on all theological disputes, liturgical practice, and the like. If anything, they give us a glimpse into some of the important arguments and discussions of the Reformation era. And it is always good know whence one came! ✠

PARISH NEWS & UPDATES: *Please note these important items!*

### **Tyler Phass - Ordination to the Diaconate**

Mark your calendars! Our bishop ordinary, the Most Rev'd Walter H. Grundorf, has asked our suffragan bishop and sometime rector of Saint Alban's Church, the Rt. Rev'd Chandler Holder Jones, SSC, to ordain our postulant Tyler Phass to the diaconate on April 1, 2017! That is the Saturday before Passion Sunday. The ordination will take place here at Saint Alban's with the time to be announced. We will need people to chip in with refreshments following the service. We also need to continue to collect donations to Tyler's ordination fund so we can help him purchase some of the things he will need for his ministry. And if all goes well, Tyler will serve as a deacon for a year and then be priested. Please keep Tyler, Holly, and Solomè in your prayers.

### **Lent Approaches**

Lent begins this year on Wednesday, March 1st. During the pre-lenten season (Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima) please be sure to bring in your palms from last year's Palm Sunday service, as we will use them to make ashes for our Ash Wednesday services.

### **Lenten Confessions**

The rector will be available to hear confessions during pre-Lent and Lent. This is a good time of year to avail oneself of the healing sacrament of penance. If you've never made use of this beautiful sacrament and experienced the healing Christ offers in it the rector would be happy to answer any questions that you have and help you in making your first confession. This sacrament is especially comforting if we have been carrying around a burden of sin that we want to unload before the Lord and his Cross. And just so everyone knows: the rector practices what he preaches and makes his private confession to another priest throughout the year! A bit of trivia: "Shrove Tuesday" (the day before Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent) gets its name from being "shriven" (forgiven) in the sacrament of penance.

### **2017 Lenten Study**

Join us during Lent as we study the Four Latin Doctors (St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and St. Gregory the Great) and the Four Greek Doctors (St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and St. Chrysostom) of the Church. We will gather weekly for Evening Prayer followed by dinner (provided) and then a study on one of the doctors ("teachers"). We'll look at their life and times,

the controversies and issues they addressed, the doctrines they expounded, and at samples of their writings. Our guide once again will be some books by the late J.W.C. Wand, sometime Bishop of London, whose book on the Four Great Heresies was used for last year's lenten study. Join us! Time and dates TBA.

### **Special Guest Preachers in February**

On February 19th we welcome the Rev'd Robert Ludwig, a dear friend of the Fr. Anderson, to preach for us. Fr. Ludwig is a priest associate at St. Stephen's Anglican Church in Timonium. We have met Fr. Ludwig's lovely wife, Rebecca, couple of times, as she has substituted on the organ, as well as one of his daughters. But this month we'll get to meet father himself! Please be sure to welcome him. Also this month, we will welcome to the pulpit the Rev'd Canon Benson Umeh, who is the brother of parishioner and vestryman Chikwelu Umeh. Canon Umeh is a priest of the Anglican Church of Nigeria, with whom the APA is in full communion. He is in the United States for the month visiting family. The date for his preaching is not set just yet, but will be either 2/12 or 2/26. Please be sure to come and welcome Canon Umeh as well!

### **A School for Priests**

The historic St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in Baltimore was once called "A School for Bishops" because a number of its rectors were elevated to the episcopate of the Episcopal Church. In a similar way St. Alban's is a "school for priests." A number of men have felt the call to Holy Orders through the ministry of our parish and later were ordained. In recent years those people have included Fr. Anderson (current rector), Fr. Donald Sackett (rector of two parishes in Illinois), and soon Mr. Tyler Phass. There were other men in earlier years as well. Well, there is now another name to add to the list. Mr. Mason Waldhauser is a senior at Eastern University outside of Philadelphia where he studies philosophy. He has recently been accepted to the diocesan discernment program and is an official "aspirant" to Holy Orders. This is stage before becoming a postulant, which is a candidate for ordination. Lord willing, in the fall, Mason will matriculate to seminary in Wisconsin at Nashotah House (this is the same place that Fr. Sackett attended for those of you who know him). We will see more Mason during vacations and the the summer, as he is a away at school, but please be sure to keep him in your prayers as he begins this exciting process. ☩